Race, Ethnicity and Nuclear War

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We were the most powerful nation. Who could tell us any longer what was fashionable and what was fun?

F. Scott Fitzgerald

The claims in Fitzgerald’s essay ‘Echoes of the Jazz Age’ (1931) have influenced the collective memory of the 1920s as an era characterized by fashion, disaffection with orthodoxies and an American cultural nationalism propelled by the growing international status of Hollywood cinema and jazz music. After the Great War – which Fitzgerald and others termed the ‘European War’, signifying the USA’s aloofness – America had emerged economically and culturally dominant. Many European states were in debt to the country across the Atlantic as a result of war loans.

These are just ‘echoes’ in 1931; the hubbub of the 1920s gave way to the deprivation of the Great Depression as a consequence of the 1929 economic crash. Fitzgerald captures the dizzying excitement of America in the 1920s, yet his mode is nostalgic and by the essay’s end he acknowledges that historical events have severed the Jazz Age from his viewing position in 1931. His narration of the 1920s is a combination of confidence in the dawning of an American age and the anxiety that this confident era was ‘borrowed time’. American cultural texts produced after 1945 were also subject to profound anxieties about the longevity and solidity of American power, even if the nation’s economic and cultural strength seemed unmatched.

This chapter focuses on American novels and short stories that depict the post-nuclear-war United States needing the intervention and tolerance of other nations to survive, namely Whitley Strieber and James W. Kunetka’s novel Warday (1984), William Tenn’s short story ‘Eastward Ho!’ (1958) and Michael Swanwick’s short story ‘The Feast of Saint Janis’ (1980). These texts belong to a larger genre of speculative fiction depicting the invasion of America, some of which were discussed in the preceding chapter. Seed describes this genre as a ‘long tradition in American writing’ exploring the ‘underside of manifest destiny’ (the belief that the USA’s expansion across the continent was inevitable and divinely willed) and exploiting ‘the fear of failure, defeat, and subversion’. America’s global
position from the 1950s to the 1980s is comparable to the British Empire’s in an earlier period, and the texts analysed in this chapter can be filed alongside late-nineteenth-century British visions of future catastrophe. Such visions of the ‘imperial homeland’ falling into ruins or being ‘reduced to savagery’ were based on ‘the premise of England’s imperial supremacy and its centrality to the world economy’. By offering readers ‘the exhibition of the mighty humbled’, British writers were asserting their empire’s contemporary greatness while expressing the ambivalences and anxieties that a position of global eminence entails.6 As with the catastrophes of late-nineteenth-century British speculative fiction, Warday, ‘Eastward Ho!’ and ‘Saint Janis’ are tailored to the geographical and temporal moment of their production. These three texts share a satirical Weltanschauung fixed upon injustices in American society: racism, economic injustice, the danger of nuclear weapons, crimes committed during the history of settlement and the irrationality of US consumerism. These are post-apocalyptic visions where the lack of national optimism (evident in ironic or melancholic tones) mourns the passing of American greatness, rather like Fitzgerald’s wistfulness in ‘Echoes of the Jazz Age’.

Consideration of these texts complements the analyses of future-war fiction in Patrick B. Sharp’s study Savage Perils. Sharp posits a Darwinian struggle for survival between races as the leitmotif of what he defines as ‘nuclear frontier fiction’ between 1946 and 1959. In this genre, nuclear attack fulfilled the symbolic function that the frontier performed in primal narratives of US nationhood: forced to rely upon their innate skills and intuition, certain types of American would reveal their natural right to thrive at the expense of others (in the 1964 film Fail Safe, the character Groeteschele urges an American nuclear strike against the USSR and asserts ‘those who can survive are the only ones worth surviving’). The terra incognita of narratives of the American frontier and European cartography provided a flattened (historically and physically) plane on which heroic masculine adventures could be performed.7 Depictions of post-apocalyptic landscapes are often congruous with these spaces of settlement, not least in terms of their narrative function, providing the opportunity for heroes to prove their bravery by penetrating and settling the unknown. This has been noted by several SF scholars. M. Keith Booker suggests post-apocalyptic worlds offered a desirable escape into fantasies of settlement, becoming ‘a new version of [the] American frontier that offers renewed possibilities for adventure that are no longer available in the routinized [sic] world of contemporary America’.8 Gary K. Wolfe sees the ‘new frontiers’ of the ‘depopulated’, ‘post-holocaust’ world as making possible ‘the sort of heroic action’ constrained by the ‘corporate, technological world’.9
I. F. Clarke hails the nuclear-war survivors of Leigh Brackett’s novel *The Long Tomorrow* (1955) as ‘pioneers of time-to-come’ retracing ‘the national epic of the frontier’.¹⁰ This reading is entirely appropriate for Brackett, who wrote scripts for Western films and won a Golden Spur Award from the Western Writers of America.¹¹ Of the 1980s post-apocalyptic film genre partly inspired by the popularity of the *Mad Max* trilogy, Joyce A. Evans comments, ‘Again and again, a surviving hero is confronted with a frontier to conquer, a civilization to rebuild’.¹² Kim Newman tracks the migration of plots and actors from Western films into the post-apocalyptic dramas *Cherry 2000* (1987), *World Gone Wild* (1988) and *Neon City* (1992).¹³

For Mick Broderick, the post-nuclear-war survivalist fantasies are ‘highly reactionary[,] reinforcing the status quo by the maintenance of conservative social regimes of patriarchal law (and lore)’.¹⁴ Broderick’s point is relevant to Robert Heinlein’s novel *Farnham’s Freehold* (1964), in which the actions of the father, Farnham, ensure his family’s survival by resurrecting a frontier lifestyle. Farnham’s first reaction to the post-apocalyptic landscape is to ‘survey it’.¹⁵ Broderick’s frame of reference is film, but the 1980s was a popular time for post-nuclear-war survivalist fiction and Brians claims ‘over a hundred violent pulp novels for men’ were published in this genre. Brians singles out the books in Jerry Ahern’s *Survivalist* series as particularly influential, with their ‘absurd macho cover art’ and ‘their philosophy that the only hope for the future lies in developing the skills to fight and overcome the menaces which will multiply in the wake of World War III’. This genre has a corollary in the children’s fiction marketplace in the form of Barbara and Scott Siegel’s *Firebrats* series.¹⁶

The post-nuclear-war future need not be Earthbound. Outer space has provided an arena in which narratives of discovery and settlement – or, colonization and expropriation – can unfold.¹⁷ Narratives of exploration and encounters with alternative forms of life in outer space (perhaps most famously in the *Star Trek* universe) are sometimes set in a future where humankind has rebuilt itself from (the threat of) nuclear war.¹⁸ Given the recurrence of colonizing new worlds in SF, Carl Abbott has shown the importance of ‘Homesteading on the Extraterrestrial Frontier’ (2005) in American SF texts: ‘Homesteading is a particular facet of the complex processes by which agriculturalists settle “empty” or underdeveloped territories’. With reference to Earthbound post-nuclear-war settings rather than outer space, this chapter builds on Abbott’s conclusion that a ‘growing body of science fiction has interrogated and complicated [the] popular history’¹⁹ of courageous Americans of European descent conquering the West.²⁰

As mentioned above, in Sharp’s interpretation it was ‘the white fron-
tiersmen and the white frontier families [who embodied] “American” virtues as they fought to overcome the corruption of modern civilized life and the savagery of the nuclear frontier’. Sharp situates nuclear frontier fiction on a historical line stretching into the nineteenth century and in relation to Darwinian notions of technology as a lever of evolutionary advantage: ‘For Darwin, the victories of civilized Europeans over their savage foes were due to technological superiority and were therefore just another example of natural selection’. Yet many texts question the notion of technological superiority as a guarantor of evolutionary survival, since advanced technology such as nuclear weapons seem to compromise the survival of the people using them. Poul Anderson’s short story ‘Tomorrow’s Children’ (co-written with F. N. Waldrop in 1947) criticizes the assumption that the inevitable victors on the nuclear frontier will be white Americans in any recognizable form. Radiation has caused a marked increase in human mutation, and the narrative pivots between Colonel Hugh Drummond’s and President Robinson’s approaches to the situation. Robinson, whose wife is pregnant, believes in a eugenic solution to preserve ‘our culture […] our historical continuity’, which Drummond opposes for ‘repeating the old Herrenvolk notion’. To use the German word for ‘master race’ in a story published shortly after World War Two inevitably recalls the genocidal policies the Nazi Party undertook to ensure Aryan racial purity. Robinson describes his plan frankly as ‘Racial death. All mutants and their parents to be sterilized whenever and wherever detected.’ Drummond opposes his colleague’s demonization of genetic variation, arguing ‘the only way to sanity – to survival – is to abandon class prejudice and race hate altogether, and work as individuals. We’re all…well, Earthlings, and subclassification is deadly.’ What Drummond professes is akin to the planetary humanism identified by Paul Gilroy, whereby environmental, military and economic crises compel us to define humankind by our shared inhabitation of a beleaguered planet. This point is also made in Leslie Marmon Silko’s novel Ceremony (1977), which concerns the return of Tayo, a Native American soldier, to his tribe’s reservation in New Mexico after the end of World War Two. While he is staying with the old man Betonie, Tayo reflects on the poverty of the Native American environment and the ‘world of comfort’ white Americans live in, a world built on land stolen from Native Americans and promises not kept. Betonie tries to mute Tayo’s vengeful desires, telling him ‘you don’t write off all the white people, just like you don’t trust all the Indians’. As he stands on a mesa near a uranium mine, Tayo’s imagination takes in the test site for the first atomic bomb and the complex at Los Alamos where it was constructed. He sees that this new world of atomic weapons has ‘no
end’, ‘no boundaries’, and from that moment on ‘human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away’.24

Warday, ‘Eastward Ho!’ and ‘Saint Janis’ do not take nineteenth-century racial hierarchies for granted. These three stories invert the central conceit of nuclear frontier fiction so World War Three actually leaves the USA open to recolonization. In these texts the iconography of the frontier is reversed, using white settlement in North America to signify primitivism in opposition to the civilizations of the Sioux, New Africa, Japan and Britain. A satirical predecessor to these narratives – one that appeared before the most rapid spread of America’s borders – is contained within Washington Irving’s History of New York (1809). Irving speculates on an invasion of Earth by Moonmen, made possible by their superior technology. Irving parallels the encounter between Moonmen and Earthlings with the encounter between European settlers and Native Americans. The Moonmen find human skin colour – ‘a variety of unseemly complexities, particularly of a horrible whiteness’ – objectionable, since they themselves are ‘pea green’. They oppose human life fiercely because they look different, and the Moonmen interpret this difference as inferiority. Accordingly the Moonmen proclaim that ‘the earth […] is inhabited by none but a race of two legged animals […] they are considered incapable of possessing any property in the planet they infest, and the right and title to it are confirmed to its original discoverers’. The ‘original discoverers’ are, of course, the lunar visitors. The justifications of the European colonizers appear unjustifiable and unreasonable when articulated by the Moonmen. Certain of their superiority and therefore their right to the Earth, the Moonmen proceed as the Europeans did:

[The Moonmen] seize upon our fertile territories […] and when we are unreasonable enough to complain, they will turn upon us and say – miserable barbarians! ungrateful wretches! – have we not come thousands of miles to improve your worthless planet[?] [Their] patience shall be exhausted, and they shall resort to their superior powers of argument – hunt us with hypogriffs, transfix us with concentrated sun-beams, demolish our cities with moonstones […] they shall graciously permit us to exist in the torrid deserts of Arabia, or the frozen regions of Lapland, there to enjoy the blessings of civilization.25

Europeans took the Native Americans’ land because they were more powerful, and in so doing, lost all moral justification for being in America.
Therefore, Europeans cannot complain if a more powerful force displaces them in the future. Franklin brings Irving together with H. G. Wells’s alien invasion narrative *The War of the Worlds* (serialized in 1897) to make a case for their shared resistance to European and American expansion and the hubris underpinning it. Irving’s early satire of settlement is strikingly prescient. It makes several literary moves that anticipate those discussed in this chapter, primarily the use of a future war and its aftermath to question the righteousness of European colonization and the automatic assumption of white superiority.

For the rest of this introduction, I will discuss *Fiskadoro* (1985) by Denis Johnson and *The Lost Traveller* (1976) by Steve Wilson, two novels that have clear affinities with *Warday*, ‘Eastward Ho!’ and ‘Saint Janis’. However, they do not invert the racial and civilizational polarity of the frontier as such. In both texts non-white communities are posited as an alternative to Western civilization; this alternative is celebrated in *The Lost Traveller* but rendered unsettling in *Fiskadoro*.

*Fiskadoro* has two key points of comparison with *Warday*, ‘Eastward Ho!’ and ‘Saint Janis’. First, the final scenes imply that the annexation of the Florida Keys by Cuba is imminent. Second, the character Mr Cheung is haunted by an impression of a nuclear blast that pays homage to Melville in its compulsive iteration of the bomb’s whiteness. Cheung is nauseated as the ‘White Dot’ explodes into ‘the All White, the Ever White, the Ultimate White of the Nucleus, the Atomic Bomb’, and it is ironic that this ‘All White’ weapon has not reinstated a world of white American privilege. In fact, the Keys communities are difficult to characterize as a whole. On one hand, the racial, ethnic and religious intermixture of the Keys communities is commonplace and accepted; on the other, primitivist tropes mark out the atavism of specific non-white groups. These unfathomable and backward groups in *Fiskadoro* are the Israelites, a ‘savage people’ who appear to follow Rastafarianism, and a group known as the Quraysh, who practice a version of Islam. The third-person narrator begins the novel by speaking through the idiom of the Keys communities, accrediting Allah, the Lord, Quetzalcoatl, Bob Marley and Jesus with the status of gods, an example of the cultural intermixture in the novel which would be inadequately understood by imposing the dichotomous compartments of the frontier model.

In *Lost Traveller*, the argument that nuclear war has rebuked the white settlement of North America is also put forward, but this disruption seems temporary. In the novel, the USA is reduced to a collection of feuding states jostling for territory, divided ideologically and physically by irradiated ‘Dead Lands’. The novel’s antiheroes belong to the gangs of Hell’s Angels.
that protect the Fief, a kingdom where California used to be. Their main rival is the dictatorial Eastern Seaboard Federation, envisaged as a version of the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. The Federation is in thrall to the valuable cultural capital bound up in the British accent, and it proclaims to be leading a ‘civilising mission’ in its ‘great drive westward’. The ‘southern statelets’ on the Gulf coast, which had been organized into an oil Cartel, are militarily occupied by the Federation. Confident that ‘God was on their side’, the Federation pushes further west, warning that lone individuals and families are threatened by ‘Johnny Redman’. It is difficult to see what kind of role Native Americans will have in the Federation’s plans, as one Federation officer professes (with feigned sympathy) that the ‘poor devils’ do not ‘last very long’ doing the labour of white men.28

During the successful war to repel the Federation’s invasion of the Fief, the protagonist Long Range defects from the Hell’s Angels to join a Lakota tribe. The novel chimes with the USA’s revaluation of Native American culture in the 1960s and 1970s, evidenced in the American Indian Movement, best-selling revisionist histories and the small number of Hollywood films offering a Native American perspective on the USA’s expansion.29

The Lakota in Lost Traveller are presented as the spiritual balm that Long Range needs, reconnecting him with nature and a meaningful existence. At the centre of the novel is a 13-page sequence recounting the rituals that initiate Long Range into the tribe, following which he reaches a richer state of consciousness. By the end of Lost Traveller, the Fief is copying the bad example of the defeated Federation and the rebuilding of American society progresses in step with the alienation of human beings from nature, from other humans and from their own desires. In the novel’s representation of the Fief and the Federation, both of which follow recognizable Western models of statecraft, laws and government interference are essentially inhibitive of human freedom. This is figured as a disease: ‘a bad case of civilisation’. While the Lakota are still harassed by the Federation at the end of the narrative, Long Range has become a ‘holy man’ and a ‘great warrior’ who rallies the tribe under his leadership. Long Range’s comrade Milt tries to remain in the Fief but it is only the Lakota community that can guarantee his existential wellbeing. In a euphoric finale, Milt casts off his gang colours into a fire and is renewed in rapturous, baptismal imagery: ‘upwards he went with the wash of the flames’.

The novel’s criticism of Western society through the Federation’s authoritarianism and expansionism is put in the mouth of Professor Sangria, snatched from the Federation by Long Range and Milt. What is ‘truly disturbing’ for Sangria ‘is the way in which the Federation is duplicating rapidly the mistakes of former times, the times before the great war.
Principally, a central government which concentrates power and wealth in itself, serves its own preoccupation with control and growth and ignores the real needs of the communities it subjects.’ The Professor wants humankind to take advantage of ‘the resources of an enlightened science’ but Milt’s response – ‘I’ll bet [...] they talked just like that before BLAM [the nuclear war]’ – undercuts the Professor’s confidence in science as the answer to this ‘second dark age’.30 Despite the Professor’s erudite argument, Long Range stubbornly insists on the truth contained in ‘Indian myths and beliefs’. Long Range believes humans are all part of nature, they should never ‘lose sight of that’, and he knows this to be correct simply because he has felt it so strongly. In the narrative of Lost Traveller, nuclear war has made the return to nature more possible by weakening the previous social order. This is tied to the Native American characters’ interpretation of nuclear war as an interruption to their subjugation by white people: Black Horse Rider says the war was seen ‘as the time prophesied for so long by [Native American] wise men, the end of a cycle, when the Wasichu, the white man, and his ways were swept away’. No longer ‘captives of the whites’, the Native American population grows on America’s Great Plains. ‘The old ways returned, and there were mighty warriors, for they felt they were living the birth of a new first age, an age of great spirit power.’ Remembering the earlier dispossession of Native American territory, the tribes now ‘ruthlessly’ protect their land.31

In contrast to the three main texts discussed in this chapter, Lost Traveller is not a reversal of America’s narrative of the frontier. It replays the frontier with a sentimentalism and fatalism reminiscent of James Fenimore Cooper’s The Last of the Mohicans (1826), a novel set in British North America during the Seven Years War (1756–63). Late-twentieth-century literary criticism of Mohicans investigated how the novel related to environmentalism, at the same time Native Americans were stereotyped as ‘a symbol of Green consciousness and New Age spiritual values’.32 Whitley Strieber’s post-nuclear-war children’s novel Wolf of Shadows (1985) implied, through an epigraph from Chief Luther Standing Bear, that nuclear war was a consequence of straying from respect of nature, and as a consequence, respect for other human life.33 Much earlier, Stuart Cloete’s two-part magazine serial ‘The Blast’ (1947) juxtaposed Native American primitivism against more complex white American technology in order to criticize the latter and link it to the nuclear weapons that had ravaged the world of the future.34 Lost Traveller fits into this trend of posing Native Americans as a desirable alternative to Western materialism. Like Cooper’s novel, where the white protagonist Hawkeye (whose racial purity is repetitiously emphasized) has learnt from the dwindling tribe of Mohicans,
Long Range has been educated by the Lakota and provides them with energy and leadership in return. It is important Native Americans have passed rituals and knowledge down to white acolytes since both narratives fatalistically suggest the Native Americans are poised to die out. The carbine rifle Long Range quickly learns to use evokes Hawkeye’s gun, from which comes Hawkeye’s nickname La Longue Carabine (‘carabine’ is the French word from which ‘carbine’ derives). *Lost Traveller* is unequivocal about the superiority of the Lakota’s lifestyle but less sure about its chance of long-term survival: Long Range rallies the Lakota’s morale while their herds contract in size. On this nuclear frontier, the struggle of Native Americans (led by a noble white man) appears brave but doomed and the alternative they represent is significant symbolically, as a model for readers in the 1970s disaffected with Western capitalism. It is not represented as a society likely to be able to resist white incursions in the future of the diegesis.

*Warday*, ‘Eastward Ho!’ and ‘Saint Janis’ show an awareness of the prejudices, greed and desires that European imperialism and American expansion projected onto the peoples destroyed as part of colonization. These texts revisit the atrocities perpetrated in America’s past, and revalue those cultures often denigrated or annihilated by the expansion of American cultural and military power. They strain against the historical narratives of Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism (the belief that American democracy is unique and other nations would benefit from emulating it). In addition, these texts ask if American cultural, industrial and technological achievements will ever be reached again, and whether the nuclear arms race is a reason not to restore the USA to its post-1945 status. Adding further complexity, the world capitalist economy the United States was ideologically committed to promote appears as one of the vehicles by which America is recolonized.

**Inverted Frontier**

William Tenn’s ‘Eastward Ho!’ projects a future where Native American nations have expanded and prospered while white American settlement shrinks. It is largely set in the ‘neat ruins’ of Trenton, New Jersey, roughly one hundred years after a nuclear war has reduced the United States to a small territory on the eastern seaboard with New York City as its capital. Native Americans have moved in to Trenton, the furthest southern extent of the United States, and Jerry Franklin (eldest son of a senator) has been commissioned to negotiate with these invaders. Expecting the Seminole, Franklin discovers that the invaders are Sioux led by the charming Chief Three Hydrogen Bombs, and while he is demanding the Sioux’s with-
drawal from Trenton, the United States is invaded from the north by a coalition of the ‘Ojibway-Cree-Montaignais’. Assisted by Sylvester Thomas, ambassador to the Sioux from the Confederate States, and with Chief Three Hydrogen Bombs’s knowing collusion, Franklin and his party escape to Asbury Park, where refugees from the United States have gathered and the remnants of the US Navy are positioned.

In this future, America has reverted back to its frontier state. Native Americans and European settler colonies coexist with varying degrees of hostility, technology is modest and subsistence agriculture is the key industry. The land to the west of the United States symbolically represented adventure and the opportunity to make a fortune. While a few texts through the centuries have been entitled *Westward Ho* – with or without the exclamation mark – Charles Kingsley’s 1855 novel (with exclamation mark) is probably the most well known; Tenn may have been familiar with the 1935 Western film featuring John Wayne. Reversing the polarity of which point of the compass held out the promise of freedom and wealth, the title is the first instance of the short story’s inversion of classic frontier narratives. More follow: it is the (white) USA that is being hemmed in and pushed off their land by Native American peoples. When these white Americans protest that Native Americans keep making and breaking treaties designed to preserve white land, the Native Americans declare they will use the land more efficiently: ‘You don’t use most of the land you have. Should we sit by and see the land go to waste?’ The Chief connects his ethical right to white territory to the practical politics of *Lebensraum*, citing the dwindling white population and the expanding Sioux population. During the nineteenth century, many key American military and political figures took a dim view of Native Americans inhabiting land that could be utilized by whites: Lewis Cass, Secretary of War, dignified the 1818 military campaign against Native American villages in Spanish-owned Florida as necessary for ‘the progress of civilization and improvement’. General William Sherman decried Native American ‘attempts at civilization [as] simply ridiculous’. Unable to assimilate into white achievements, for Sherman extermination held out the sole means of preparing the West for civilization: ‘The more we can kill this year, the less will have to be killed the next year.’

In a reading relevant to Sharp’s discussion of nuclear frontier fiction, the re-ascendancy of Native American nations is accounted for using the concept of survival of the fittest in its original Darwinian sense: the species that survive to reproduce are those best matched to their environment. Readers of Tenn’s short story are invited to believe that after a nuclear war the Native Americans’ tribal structure enabled them to adapt quickest to
the new conditions. Rather like the way the material expansion of the United States was ideologically driven by Manifest Destiny, in ‘Eastward Ho!’ the social adaptability of Native Americans is translated into the metaphysical inevitability of their power: ‘the Indians were so queer, and so awesome. Sometimes you thought that destiny had meant them to be conquerors, with a conqueror’s careless inconsistency. Sometimes…’39

Given that in this future the technological emblems of civilization (microscopes, guns and oil lamps) are owned and operated successfully by Native Americans, their pre-eminence seems authored not only by God but by the Darwinian discourse cited by Sharp in which tool-making determines the supremacy of species. Tenn’s short story plays a precarious game, whereby the interactions and comforts of the Native Americans are much more familiar to most readers of ‘Eastward Ho!’ than the anachronisms and abject existence of the future United States, but we experience the Sioux through the narrative voice of Franklin, whose language comments on the suspicion, inscrutability and unpredictability that characterized some representations of Native Americans.40 The ambiguity of this presentation of Native Americans is implied by the ‘Sometimes…’ that Franklin appends to his appraisal of the Sioux. This undercuts the certainty of Franklin’s thoughts at this point in the narrative and leaves the reader unsure how far the Native American characters deserve our emotional allegiances.

The representation of white Americans as struggling for political recognition in the face of apathy and outright racism should also be understood in the context of the civil rights movement of the 1950s. By posing white Americans, and particularly white men, as the most marginalized and embattled demographic group of the nation’s future, ‘Eastward Ho!’ could be read as a conservative tract protesting the goals of the civil rights movement: unless the interests of heterosexual white men are loudly defended, their rights will be eroded and they will be subjected to the racism and violence depicted in the story. However, several aspects of ‘Eastward Ho!’ mitigate against such a reading, and its subject may ultimately be the insidiousness of supposedly liberal positions. The 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas Supreme Court decision gave legal impetus to racial desegregation, but President Eisenhower hoped that its progress would be slow. In another example of this gradualism, failed Democratic Presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson earned the ire of a black audience in Los Angeles in 1956 when he said ‘we must proceed gradually, not upsetting habits or traditions that are older than the Republic’.41 In ‘Eastward Ho!’ some of the Native Americans in the story are unquestionably racist, and while the Chief’s tone is far less strident, he too shares Makes Much
Radiation’s belief in white inferiority compared to Native Americans, praising Franklin with ‘You look like a responsible man for a paleface’. The Chief not only re-uses language previously represented as offensive in the narrative (‘paleface’), but by foregrounding Franklin’s pronounced responsibility as uncharacteristic for his race, the Chief implicitly asserts the irresponsibility of whites generally. The Chief’s praise for Franklin comes as he gives him a gun, emphasizing the trust he places in the US envoy, saying ‘it’s the individual that counts’.42 Once more the patronizing language used confirms that the Chief sees whites en masse as the object of his pity, but distinctive people within that mass can be selected and trusted. To see whites as capable, as individuals, of bettering their lot, while reluctant to respect their rights collectively by altering social attitudes on a wider structural scale appears to be the text’s critique of the essentially conservative position of only uplifting trusted members of a minority.

Tenn takes productive liberties with his inversion of the frontier motif. If it was an absolutely faithful reversal of the nineteenth-century frontier, then rather than running East to West, white civilization displacing Native American savagery, it would run West to East, with Native American civilization displacing white savagery – which the story does do. But it is not the Native Americans who deliver the exclamation of the short story’s title. The white Americans proclaim ‘Eastward Ho!’ as a gaggle of refugees set out across the Atlantic Ocean in ‘three forty-five-foot gaff-rigged schooners’. Franklin gives his orders:

Due east all the way. To the fabled lands of Europe. To a place where a white man can stand at last on his own two legs. Where he need not fear persecution. Where he need not fear slavery. Sail east, Admiral, until we discover a new and hopeful world – a world of freedom!43

In his famous paper ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’ (1893), the historian Frederick Jackson Turner professed that the first frontier ‘was the Atlantic coast. It was the frontier of Europe’, a contact zone of physical danger, hardship and the unknown. By venturing across the ocean and settling on the other side, the first European settlers began the long process of becoming Americans by virtue of the self-reliance and endeavour the environment called upon them to exhibit:

the frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanisation. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe […] He must accept the
conditions which it furnishes, or perish [...] Moving westward, the frontier became more and more American.\textsuperscript{44}

At the end of ‘Eastward Ho!’, the inverted nineteenth-century frontier has morphed into the earliest frontier constituted by the ocean. While they were not the first English-speaking settlers, the migrants known as the Pilgrims traversed this frontier in 1620 in pursuit of freedom of worship and the financial opportunities offered by American plantations and Native American trade. In the short story’s symbolic structure, Franklin’s destination point is a mythic space of security from persecution. Given Europe’s history of religious and ethnic violence, evidenced in the decision of the 1620 Pilgrims to seek freedom of worship in North America, the continent’s invocation at the end of Tenn’s short story is an irony much deeper and more cutting of white supremacism than the obvious satire of the inverted frontier. The idea of Europe as a place of freedom and sanctuary is posed as a myth, a ‘fabled land’, and significantly the refugees do not arrive there during the narrative of the story. Indeed, one might conjecture they cannot reach this Europe, unless it is a different place from the Europe of the mid-twentieth century, whose history contradicts its interpretation as a continent free of persecution. Franklin’s proclamation that in Europe ‘a white man can stand at last on his own two legs’ seems darkly comic, given that the continent’s modern history of colonial exploitation staged white freedom against the slave-labour of Africans and their descendants. Turning a free and safe Europe into a myth may be the most powerful means by which ‘Eastward Ho!’ satirizes the supposed superiority of whiteness.

In Whitley Strieber and James W. Kunetka’s novel \textit{Warday and the Journey Onward} (1984), a fictional travelogue set in an America devastated by nuclear war, the British and the Japanese are aiding the reconstruction of the USA, and America has become dependent on these two former imperial adversaries. Further, two groups of people defeated during the USA’s expansion west have re-asserted their entitlement to the land – Hispanic Americans and Native Americans. Covering large swathes of Texas and New Mexico, a Hispanic Free State bordering Mexico has declared its independence from the United States, calling itself Aztlan. In the 1960s and 1970s, Aztlán was a concept used by the Chicano Movement to celebrate and reclaim their heritage. In Nahuatl, Aztlán means ‘the lands to the north’, and it refers to the mythic point of origin of the Aztecs before they migrated south to their capital Tenochtitlán (where Mexico City now stands). Used to refer to the American South West geographically, Aztlán was projected as the homeland of Chicanos and it functioned as a political symbol of their indigenousness.\textsuperscript{45} In \textit{Warday}, nuclear war rewrites the
USA’s acquisition of parts of Mexico during the 1845–48 War. The leader of Aztlan (spelt without an accent in Warday) reminds his audience of this as he defends the country against charges of separatism. Interpreting the USA’s appropriation of Texas, New Mexico and California as ‘theft’ posits the emergence of Aztlan as an act of justice redressing a past crime committed by the United States. Consequently, the nuclear war that made its emergence possible is praised for correcting historical error: ‘Of course, we are very sorry for all the death and suffering. But Warday also brought some good – our Aztlan.’ Resistance to Aztlan as a distinct geohistorical entity belonging to Chicanos is apparent in Strieber’s passive-aggressive narration (Strieber and Kunetka are characters in their own novel). Strieber seems reluctant to finalize the movement of history: ‘This was their place, their time at last, and these their days of sunshine.’\(^{46}\) The metaphor of the reclamation of Aztlan as ‘days of sunshine’ suggests that while Hispanic Americans and Native Americans rightfully inhabit this location at this moment in time, the weather will change and their ‘time’ will pass. In Warday, the frontier has swung against the United States by peoples previously defeated in battle. Nuclear war allows land previously seized in victory and incorporated into the American nation to be retaken, although the sly narration suggests Aztlan’s occupation of the land is not final. This residual ambience of American patriotism lurks throughout Warday, and a social critique of the USA is more clearly enunciated in ‘Eastward Ho!’ and ‘Saint Janis’.

**In Darkest America**

Several generic markers situate ‘The Feast of Saint Janis’ as a post-nuclear-war fiction: mutated radiation victims (a marginalized group known as the jennie-deafs), a limited and strictly rationed electricity supply, previously densely populated locations transformed into dangerous no-go areas and a capitalized euphemism for World War Three and its aftermath, ‘the Collapse’. Washington DC lies in ‘ruins’,\(^{47}\) symbolizing the absence of central government. Nuclear war has rewritten international relations of power: the character Wolfgang Hans Mbikana (Wolf) has travelled to the American East Coast from New Africa in a position of privilege. The future New Africa is economically and technologically ascendant and taking advantage of the dilapidated USA whose political being is regionally fragmented and whose public health is precarious. The iconography and myths of European colonialism are invoked and inverted, so that traits the European empires projected onto colonized subjects are used to depict Americans: public pandemonium, flawed command of standard English,
the heat of the colonies, lack of civility, squalor, immaturity, racial degeneration and the ignorance of indigenous peoples in the present compared to the monuments of human achievement lying in their past.

By using Wolf as focal point, the reader shares the New African traveller’s alienation in America, and the feeling that ‘home’ is located far from here. As the reader follows Wolf’s impressions of Baltimore’s docks, the USA is strikingly unhomely:

the rick-a-rack of commercial buildings crowded against the waterfront. The clatter of hand-drawn carts mingled with a mélange of exotic cries and shouts, the alien music of a dozen American dialects. Workers, clad in coveralls most of them, swarmed about, grunting and cursing in exasperation when an iron wheel lurched in a muddy pothole. Yet there was something furtive and covert about them, as if they were hiding an ancient secret.48

One is reminded of Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978), which outlines how the history of the West’s scholarly, administrative and creative writing about ‘the Orient’ took on a critical mass ensuring that making a statement on the Orient could only take place if that statement’s verisimilitude satisfactorily fitted into the existing body of thought. One consequence of this weight of credibility is that Orientalism spoke for the people of the Orient because they lacked the material power and resources to enter Orientalist discourse and speak for themselves. Said suggests that in representing the people of the Orient, Orientalists would repeatedly construct an image of the Orient that buttressed the West’s self-image as superior and civilized. Orientals appeared as unscrupulous, despotic, inscrutable, sensual and cruel, and against those qualities Westerners appeared fair, democratic, honest, chaste and kind.49 Orientalism is a seminal building block of postcolonial studies, but it has been subject to various qualifications, revisions and oppositions.50 One of its strongest ideas, however, and arguably the least contested, is that the West’s ability and will to exert its representation of the Orient is the cultural expression of the material practices of colonialism and imperialism. Wolf’s perception of the United States bears close affinities to the Orientalist images that European colonial administrators, scholars, soldiers and writers constructed, particularly the images of the British rule in India. The British Empire’s India was characterized by squalor, chaos and the enigmatic quality of Indian society – for Wolf, America’s disorder poses an ‘ancient secret’, a question to be solved, presumably by their colonizers. Wolf’s impressions register the disorder around him, using ‘clatter’ and ‘rick-a-rack’ to convey onomatopoeically the surrounding noise. The mosaic of languages spoken keeps Wolf at a
distance – his observation never becomes empathy. Tellingly, the narrative refers to the Americans as ‘natives’, a term which carries the pejorative associations of underdevelopment and inferiority. Another seminal text in postcolonial studies is the reading of Joseph Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness* (serialized in 1899) performed by Nigerian novelist and critic Chinua Achebe, who protested against Conrad’s novel’s canonical centrality on the grounds of its racist representation of Africans. One of Achebe’s criticisms of *Heart of Darkness* is the demeaning language Conrad puts into the mouths of black characters (on the rare occasion they speak), implying their idiocy through their flawed command of English. Achebe sums this up by writing ‘Language is too grand for these chaps; let’s give them dialects!’ – exactly how the workers on Baltimore’s docks are described speaking. Wolf travels as a representative of the Southwest Africa Trade Company (whose similarity in name to the East India Company that opened India up to British trade extends the aforementioned points of congruence). Chiming with the stereotypes of the British Raj, the New African foreign service administrators in America universally drink ‘gin-and-tonic’. The heat of the USA is stressed, ‘sweltering’ and ‘oppressive’ during the middle of day, echoing the warnings against exposure to the midday sun in Britain’s tropical colonies; this was observed by the Indian-born writer Rudyard Kipling and recorded in song by Noël Coward, whose lyrics used the heat to satirize English stubbornness: ‘mad dogs and Englishmen / Go out in the midday sun’.

Wolf’s mission leads him to negotiate with Charles DiStephano, Comp-troller for Northeast Regional, de facto ruler of the upper East Coast of America and the epitome of the lack of civility the New Africans detest in Americans. DiStephano is difficult, dissembling, and ‘Wolf was disconcerted. He was used to a more civilized, a more leisurely manner of doing business.’ On learning that Wolf has to travel to Boston for DiStephano’s decision on the Company’s proposal, his fellow New African Ajuji sneers, ‘That’s exactly the sort of treatment one comes to expect from these savages.’ A financial failure back in New Africa, her bruised sense of self is rebuilt by distancing the Americans as subhuman. Many New African colonial officials find the American manner brutish, although Ajuji’s prejudices are the most keenly developed: ‘[“]These – *Yanks*,” she hissed the word to emphasize its filthiness, “live in squalor. Their streets are filthy, their cities are filthy, and even the ones who aren’t rotten with genetic disease are filthy. A child can be taught to clean up after itself. What does that make them?”’ Ajuji links the dirtiness of colonized peoples to their lack of maturity. This imperial trope of infantilization made paternal colonial intervention seem right – Kipling’s framing of colonized people was
‘Half-devil and half-child’.  

A similar mix of abject foulness and immaturity characterizes the Native Americans’ assumptions about white America in ‘Eastward Ho!’ Various historical stereotypes surrounding Native Americans are attached to the beleaguered white Americans. The white Americans cannot speak, read or write standard English; they are superstitious and particularly susceptible to the effects of alcoholic beverages; their social organization is feudal and leadership roles pass along hereditary lines. These ‘romantic children’ elegize about their traditions in hopeless notes, that their United States was once as great as the vigorous Native American nations, appropriating the speech of the elder Tamenund at the close of *The Last of the Mohicans*, who lamented the ‘palefaces are masters of the earth, and the time of the Red Men has not yet come again’. Sarah Calvin, the daughter of the Supreme Court Chief Justice, has been living with the Sioux as an official hostage. As well as wearing Native-American robes and braiding her hair in a fashionable Sioux style, Calvin has tried to dye the colour of her skin. She does not want to return to the white USA and swears at Franklin, ‘Filthy pale-face! Foul, ugly, stinking whiteskins! I’m an Indian, can’t you see I’m an Indian? My skin isn’t white – it’s brown, brown!’ Having internalized the Native American estimation of white culture, she physically fights to pass as ‘brown’ instead of accepting an identity as white, which she associates with humiliating filth.

Wolf meets his fellow Africans in a Baltimore version of a European colonial club: ‘The Uhuru Club was ablaze with light by the time he wandered in, a beacon in a dark city. Its frequenters, after all, were all African foreign service, with a few commercial reps such as himself forced in by the insular nature of American society, and the need for polite conversation.’ The colour codes of the narration construct the Uhuru Club as a place of enlightenment holding out against the swarming blackness of American society. The light of New African colonialism is also the light of learning shining the way through the American night. Some debate takes place between the New Africans about whether the USA used to be technologically advanced, registering the familiar ambivalence about the usefulness of America’s achievements in warfare and space exploration. When one New African defends Americans as ‘hardly savages’ because ‘before the Collapse they put men on the moon’, he gets this reply from Ajuji: ‘Technology! Hard-core technology, that’s all it was, of a piece with the kind that almost destroyed us all. If you want a measure of a people, you look at how they live.’ For Ajuji, technology does not measure out a people’s level of civilization. Social habitat defines ‘a measure of a people’, although her standards appear snobbish by overlooking economic mate-
rial conditions in favour of seeing American decrepitude as a cultural propensity towards squalor. The faded grandeur of ‘rusting refinery buildings’ in Philadelphia signifies the power that the United States once wielded; the buildings rise ‘to the sky forever in tragic magnificence’.\(^6\) The ‘tragic’ quality of the refinery testifies to the nation’s squandered potential, in which labour and capital were directed into nuclear weapons that, as Ajuji protests, nearly eradicated life from the planet. To see America’s fate via the claims of tragedy is to see its lowly future as the appropriate repercussion of its military hubris. American autonomy seems dubious and Philadelphia, home of the Continental Congress that adopted the Declaration of Independence, lies decrepit.

The dénouement of ‘Saint Janis’ reveals the savagery of post-nuclear-war America in a spectacle of sexual violence. White Americans are discovered to be savages regulated by crude social ritual and manipulated by politicians, and the text reflects this critique back on twentieth-century America. In ‘Saint Janis’, the character of Maggie has volunteered to go on a music tour culminating in Boston, with her appearance and voice surgically altered so she resembles Janis Joplin, the lead singer of the countercultural California-based rock group Big Brother and the Holding Company. As the title suggests, Joplin (who died in 1970 of a heroin overdose) has special status in the collective imagination of the future. The tour (and Wolf’s observation of it) is organized by the government, and the drug-taking star persona of Joplin officially represents the United States: ‘Janis Joplin, our famous national singer’.\(^6\) As Joplin, Maggie’s performance on stage ‘roused the audiences to a frenzy’;\(^6\) on the final date of the tour on Boston Common, she provokes a sexual fury in the participants so strong the crowd murder her. During the performance couples start having sex and small fires are started: ‘the lights and the bestial noise of the revelers combined to create the feel of a Witch’s Sabbath’. A pagan ritual has begun and the people are swallowed by primal urges, connected by figurative language to the natural force of flowing water: ‘the crowd roared and surged forward. An ocean of humanity converged on the stage, smashing through the police lines, climbing up on the wooden platform.’ During the violence, Hawk, one of the lighting crew, offers Wolf official and unofficial justifications. Officially, the ‘social engineers and their machines’ believe the base urges the Joplin ritual unleashes will raise the birth rate and stop America’s population dwindling. Hawk’s subsequent gesture undermines the official justification and resituates the ritual as an exercise in keeping power: ‘he spat over the edge of the platform. “Ahhhh, why should I spout their lies for them? It’s just bread and circuses is all, just a goddammed release for the masses.”’ Maggie dies, so the government
is not the focus of the populace’s wrath, and that end is desperately brutal as the crowd waves about the ‘shreds of Maggie’s dress’. Cueing readers to see the ritual murder as a comment on late-twentieth-century America (and possibly a conservative warning that the emancipatory energies of the counterculture would result in social disorder), before the violence begins Wolf comments, ‘This must be how America was all the time before the Collapse.’ Hawk’s comment, ‘This is a sick country’, is a medical and a moral diagnosis on the America of 1980.

DiStephano is perfectly frank: there have been 22 versions of ‘Janis’ since the Collapse, and Maggie volunteered to play Janis knowing her predecessors had been massacred. The government-sponsored tour is a barometer of the national emotional climate:

‘Every year Janis offers herself to the crowd. And every year they tear her apart. A sane woman would not make the offer; a sane people would not respond in that fashion. I’ll know that my country is on the road to recovery come the day that Janis lives to make a second tour.’ [DiStephano] paused. ‘Or the day we can’t find a woman willing to play the role, knowing how it ends.’

DiStephano does not rationalize the violence in the name of encouraging the birth rate. It is purely the attempt to channel the insanity of a poor, dying people and the individuals amongst them who crave ‘fame and glory’. The willingness to exchange one’s life for fame literally is a grotesque distortion of the USA’s star-making media networks. It is Janis who is to be consumed at her own feast.

DiStephano tells Wolf he was chosen to see this violence as a warning to the rising New Africa. The Comptroller believes the negotiator will ‘certainly rise to a responsible position within the Southwest Africa Trade Company. Your decision will affect our economy […] When that happens, I want you to understand one thing about our land: We have nothing to lose.’ One is put in mind of the 1970s American President who cultivated a reputation for irrationality and unpredictability in order to imply to North Vietnam that he was willing to fight with nuclear weapons. In a late 1970s book, one of President Nixon’s top aides recounts Nixon in 1968 considering ‘what he called the “madman theory” if elected president. This entailed exploiting his reputation as a hardliner to frighten North Vietnam that he would launch a nuclear attack if it did not make peace.’

DiStephano’s message to Wolf appears to be: make your future decisions in the USA’s best economic interests because a people driven to insane rituals of sexual violence are psychologically willing for more war. ‘Janis’ portrays the American state as able to contemplate war with little difficulty
Declarations of Dependence

In *Warday* and ‘Janis’, the USA is financially reliant on other nations in a form that could be called neocolonialism – just as US assistance around the world since 1945 has been criticized for encouraging forms of economic dependency that are neocolonial.67 This section understands these representations in terms of a global free market in which the strength of the American economy seemed challenged by the success of Japan and West Germany – two countries defeated by the Allies in World War Two and whose economic rebuilding afterwards was driven by the aid America ‘poured on’, as *Warday* reminds us. The memory of the Marshall Plan flashes up in this future because now is the time for the recipients of US aid to make good the moral balance. In several places, Britain’s efforts to assist America after nuclear war are compared to the USA’s entry into World War Two on the Allied side. In this frame of understanding, British aid is nothing less than what is expected. As a fictional teacher in Baldwin, Pennsylvania puts it, ‘When it came time for [the British] to repay their debt for our help and support through two world wars, they didn’t hesitate.’68

During the 1970s and into the early 1980s, the American economy was experiencing high inflation and low employment. Every year ‘between 1973 and 1981, the average income of employed workers, adjusted for inflation, fell by at least 2 percent’. America’s heavy industries felt the strain, with the number of permanent jobs in the automobile industry declining from 940,000 to around 500,000 between 1978 and 1982, and the steel industry experienced a similar drop.69 The vulnerability of American workers was seen to be linked to Japanese imports, especially in automobile manufacture. In March 1981, the US Secretary of State and the Japanese Foreign Minister concurred that the state of the US automobile industry was *not* due to Japanese competition; nonetheless, the widespread perception in America ‘held [Japan] as a culprit’ and the two politicians felt this sentiment could feed calls for protectionist measures in Congress.70 Later that year, William E. Brock, US Trade Representative, drew President Reagan’s attention to Japan’s share of the US automobile and motorbike market (21 per cent and 65 per cent respectively). Brock highlights what he perceives as the unfairness of the Japanese state’s curbs on certain imports: ‘Japanese success in penetrating U.S. markets and the resulting U.S. trade deficit [...] have become serious political issues because
Japan does not permit sufficient access to those of its markets in which the U.S. is competitive.

Grassroots campaigns to ‘Buy American’ were launched by garment and automobile unions; job losses and ‘declining sales of domestically made products’ in the period have been attributed to increased foreign competition, US companies relocating production abroad, or ‘buying parts or finished products from foreign manufacturers’. Rather than fall equally on all Americans, industrial workers were heaviest hit, and the disparity between rich and poor grew in the 1980s.

The seeming unfairness of Japan’s and West Germany’s fiscal growth, which by the 1980s was read by many Americans as occurring at the expense of their domestic economy, seems to inform Warday and ‘Saint Janis’. America’s recovery after nuclear war is imagined to be handicapped because of the economic conditions attached to the assistance provided by other nations. These representations of Japan, Europe and New Africa’s exploitation of a post-nuclear-war America reflect the resentment that countries whose poverty necessitated US aid have come to outstrip American economic power (in the cases of Japan and West Germany, at least).

To borrow a recurrent symbol, in re-establishing its civilization, the frontier has been weighted unjustly against America by its economic competitors. The character Tevis in Warday, whose economic judgments are made credible by his profession as a university professor, complains, ‘There will never be another United States as free, as powerful, as magnificent as there was before. From a statistical standpoint, we regressed too far. Now outsiders can control how much reconstruction we do of our technological base industries, and thus make sure we stay just far enough behind not to be a threat.’ By way of contrast, in Kim Stanley Robinson’s novel The Wild Shore (1984), ‘the fall of American civilization [is] partly deserved’ because the nuclear weapons the USA built threatened the species.

Given that Warday and ‘Janis’ depict dystopian societies being read in relation to the American economy and its social effects, it would be remiss not to acknowledge Tom Moylan’s towering study Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia (2000). One feature of Moylan’s book is a series of case studies of late-twentieth-century fictional dystopia. Noting the ‘economic restructuring, political opportunism, and cultural implosion’ in the USA and UK since the 1970s, Moylan interprets SF texts as forced to adopt the dystopia as a critical position because utopianism was colonized by the imaginary of advertising. He reads a series of critical dystopian texts as reworkings of the genre intended to fit the new ‘economic, political, and cultural conditions’ of the era, especially the sense that the global range of free market capitalism had created a closed circuit outside of which
no space existed to step beyond the ‘social reality’ constituted by this economic system. However, perhaps because of their publication slightly before Moylan’s case studies, neither text discussed here operates in the politically progressive ways identified by Moylan. ‘Janis’ lacks the ‘radical hope’ that would programme readers to see its future as avoidable or (if the story is interpreted as a veiled version of the USA in 1980) this present as improvable. Nonetheless, its vision is effective as a satire on the economic and social state of America. Warday seems closer to the ‘fashionable temptation to despair in the early 1980s’ Moylan sees subsequent trends in critical dystopia rejecting.\textsuperscript{75} At the end of this chapter it will be evident that Warday offers hope, but its confidence in American redemption is lodged in a particular group of citizens. Moreover, this hope is founded on a nostalgic return to American values – the desire for the nation to retrace its steps rather than break away from its historical trajectory.

The complexity and sophistication by which ‘outsiders’ manipulate the circuits of global capital to arrest American redevelopment in Warday are well conveyed. The Centers for Disease Control constitutes the largest non-military US Government agency, and it

is heavily supported by the British. US tax collection procedures are still too minimal to guarantee the kind of budgetary consistency a massive operation like CDC requires. What the English do is simple: they pay CDC’s salaries out of their general exchequer, then bill the US Federal Reserve bank in Atlanta, which transfers gold down at Fort Knox from the American pile to the British pile.\textsuperscript{76}

The British provide medical aid to sick Americans and supply capital to generate growth in the economy, but various characters that Strieber and Kunetka meet think these are covert schemes to ensure the USA’s abjection. The rhetoric of aid allows the British to occupy parts of North America militarily and the conditions attached to outside investment ensure the end of America’s independence. The issue of dependence is key: the novel is vocal in seeing the nation becoming a colonial possession (curiously, Warday does not refer to the fact that the USA was once part of British North America). Tevis is a major advocate of this interpretation of UK aid:

look at the English. They’re all over the place. Two thousand British bureaucrats are running this country through the blind of the Relief, which is really a colonial government disguised as a sort of Red Cross with teeth […] You didn’t see Belgium developing the Congo. [The undamaged powers] do not need our markets, they need our resources, and they will encourage American economic development
just enough to get our agricultural system running on a stable base, and then they will put the brakes on.\textsuperscript{77}

With specific reference to European colonialism, Tevis fears the US is being cultivated as an ancillary satellite of a new economic order centred on Japan and Europe.

\textit{Warday} and ‘Janis’ register some Americans’ frustration that the economic system the United States supported around the world had delivered such bitter rewards. The effects of economic downturn on the working class are symbolically enacted on the post-nuclear-war stage. Rather than see affluent Americans benefiting from this economic system, resentment is displaced onto visitors from other countries deemed to profit from American misfortune. To reinforce my reading of post-nuclear-war America as a figuration of national economic decline, recurrent images visually echo the postindustrial shift that began in the 1970s, such as when Hawk surveys the American landscape out of a train window on Maggie’s tour. He ‘stared moodily at the broken-windowed shells that were once factories and warehouses. “Look out there, pilgrim, that’s my country,” he said in a disgusted voice. “Or the corpse of it.”’\textsuperscript{78} The end of industry signifies the death of the country. After World War Three, one of the first-aid stations the British establish is ‘in the showroom of a local Ford dealership’,\textsuperscript{79} the British state usurping a major symbol of American industrial prestige. Strieber and Kunetka meet a strikingly obnoxious Canadian banker on a train, who poses as someone ensuring the flow of capital into the United States by making ‘a market for persons wishing to buy and sell instruments of ownership in American plants and equipment, trademarks, patents, and proprietary secrets’. However, the labyrinthine financial machinations seem to leave US companies less financially robust than before: ‘one can buy a complete set of plans for the Boeing 747, including all supporting documentation, wiring diagrams, and subordinate electronic equipment schematics, and the right to use them’.\textsuperscript{80} Canada joins the international strip-mining of American companies’ last few assets, namely its intellectual property. This seems like the liquidation of a company that has gone into receivership rather than meaningful assistance.

Reflecting on Fitzgerald’s hailing of American power in the 1920s by its influence on the cut of ‘Gentleman’s clothes’, which symbolize ‘the power that man must hold and that passes from race to race’,\textsuperscript{81} control over fashion resides with the British and Chicanos. Residents of Los Angeles can buy ‘something called \textit{The Overseas Journal} for British residents. It’s all about […] how to avoid the embarrassment of old-fashioned American hairstyles by going to local branches of chic London salons.’ Similarly, the resurgence of the Chicano population in Aztlan drives the purchase of men’s suits from
London: ‘These people were Aztlan’s elite […] Across the aisle from me sat a man in a magnificent suit, perhaps even a Savile Row creation.’

With the exception of the British, the Japanese are the nation involved most closely in American redevelopment in Warday. In Aztlan, the Japanese have sent medicine, road-repair teams, irrigation equipment, cars, a train and many soldiers. The cars Strieber and Kunetka see are predominantly Toyota and Nissan limousines, ‘the modern hallmark of the Japanese businessman’. While reflecting on the residual presence of the World War Two race hate between Japan and the USA, John W. Dower wrote of the 1980s that ‘rising economic tensions between the two countries prompted the resurrection of crude racial images and invectives on both sides’. One of those American images of the Japanese, as a threatening mass, seems relevant to the representations in Warday. ‘Little Tokyo […] now extends all the way to Sixth Street. It must be four times its prewar size.’ The character Tanaka, planning a new train line between LA and Oakland, exemplifies the way these narratives personalize economic disparity within America by having rich immigrants profiting from the economic collapse:

I’ve got my whole family here now. We bought a lovely house in Beverly Hills last year. Lovely house. Pola Negri used to live there. Or maybe Theda Bara, we’re not sure. We are redoing the gardens and installing a complete computerised home security system. It’s lots of fun, because such large houses are unobtainable in Japan.

The Los Angeles of the future is soaking up overspill from overcrowded Japan, and – referring to the opportunities for construction in the USA – Tanaka proclaims, ‘A whole new world is being built in this country and it’s starting with California.’ It is straightforward to read this ‘new world’ as one in which the USA has a decreasing economic stake, even in its own investment and property. The fate of that ‘lovely house in Beverly Hills’ functions in the novel’s symbolic system as a synecdoche for the country – the change of ownership means its history of previous occupation is being forgotten. Further, this (national) space is being made more secure by its latest custodians, and one infers they will be more effective than the previous owners in using technology to maintain the sovereignty of the new space. They are safe-guarding it from without and transforming it within, and appropriately for the novel’s issue with ‘Japanization’, the garden is being altered. The New World’s status as a pastoral paradise – a garden – bringing forth plenitude has been hailed across the centuries, praising the fertility of the land west of the Appalachian mountain range, Massachusetts doctor and almanac writer Nathaniel Ames wrote in 1758
that it had become ‘the Garden of the World’. In this future the garden is in foreign hands and they are remaking it to their specifications.

Tanaka’s plan to modernize his expensive house using up-to-date security technology emblematizes contemporaneous trends in American urban space. Los Angeles in *Warday* exemplifies a process I conceive as follows: the social consequences of the deregulated market economy that the Reagan administration continued and extended led to even greater division of wealth, more endemic poverty and greater neglect of American urban centres. America’s abandoned city centres provided the imaginative stage on which to pathologize and criminalize poverty (which also has a racial dimension), necessitating more authoritarian police powers to maintain order. In unravelling this marriage of economic liberalism and increasing encroachment of personal movement and civil liberties, I am building on the argument of David R. Bewley-Taylor:

> It is no coincidence that [the emergence of gated communities] accelerated during a period dominated by free-market capitalism. As policies of the Reagan administration tilted wealth towards those who already had money and left city cores to decline, more people could afford to move to gated communities and lock themselves away from the poverty and crime of the inner city.

Americans able to afford to move to the suburbs or gated communities participate in the impoverishment of US urban space, seen as crime-haunted and demanding ever more police action, with the LAPD utilizing helicopters with infrared cameras and the city-wide traffic monitoring CCTV – what Mike Davis calls ‘Fortress L.A.’ Bewley-Taylor notes the concurrence of Los Angeles leading the country in expanding and extending the aegis of the LAPD in an era in which manufacturing jobs in the city were being relocated overseas. As space in Los Angeles is privatized and militarized, as freedom of trade creates the social contexts in which freedom of movement, of assembly and of domicile are highly limited, Davis suggests that one particular genre of popular culture is attuned to this antimony: ‘Hollywood’s pop apocalypses and pulp science fiction have been more realistic, and politically perceptive [than contemporary urban theory] in representing the programmed hardening of the urban surface in the wake of the social polarizations of the Reagan era.’

Produced in 1984, I argue that the presence of foreign investors and aid workers becomes a way for *Warday* to dramatize the increasing climate of fear and authoritarian policing in US cities – in the novel, LA is a place of incessant police surveillance. Partly because of the novel’s allegiance to deep-held notions of autonomous and inviolate American individualism,
domestic authoritarianism is displaced onto a foreign presence whose exploitative capital represents the networks of multinational capitalism in which the USA is implanted and whose social consequences are driving heightened policing. Articulating this thatchwork of interconnections, however, sits uneasily with the novel’s patriotism, and it understands the British intervention through an ideology that sees Britain in thrall to centralized structures of command. Visiting the British Relief in Dallas, Strieber says, ‘I cannot help but be uneasy in this foreign-controlled enclave. Like most Americans, my trust in massive central governments is nil. I am uneasy around these British civil servants with their paramilitary pretensions’.95 The British are intent on facilitating the flow of international capital to their own advantage and extending the state into every citizen’s life: British Military Rule has intensified in ‘areas where the population is in a state of confusion or upheaval, and the local authorities are not able to cope’. The reference to ‘paramilitary pretensions’ positions Britain’s central government as authoritarian shading into fascist. For the Destructuralists in the novel, the British Relief seeks to establish draconian national structures: ‘big government is big poison’.96 Perceived to have a ‘massive central government’, the British in America function as shorthand for the interference in individual rights that rides shotgun with the social effects of the free market.

As noted above with the British Relief aid station in a Ford dealership, these texts articulate anxiety about America’s place in the economic ecosystem through the circulation of brands. Characters being interviewed in Warday are repeatedly impressed by Strieber and Kunetka’s Sanyo recorder and in California there ‘is a much stronger Japanese influence than ever before […] And there are cars: new Nissans […] sporty Toyota Z-90s, Isuzus and Mitsubishis and the occasional Mercedes-Benz. There are also a few Fords’.97 Appearing as an afterthought, the reference to ‘a few Fords’ makes US manufacture appear as an irrelevant species headed for extinction, at a time when the automobile workforce almost halved. If brands are a way for Warday to displace the contradictions of US capitalism into the invasion of foreign competitors, ‘Janis’ uses them to critique American consumerism. ‘Janis’ uses America’s brands to argue that this nuclear-armed civilization in the twentieth century is as superstitious and irrational as those so-called primitive societies it has periodically defined itself against.

Some Americans are privileged in Swanwick’s future; DiStephano’s dress is of a familiar national type, ‘the traditional suit and tie of American businessmen’.98 DiStephano is the United States government in that region, and the idea of a comptroller as ruler squarely aligns economics as
the basis for political power. DiStephano embodies all that is vile about a political and economic elite, manipulating the masses while claiming to be satiating the popular will and unashamed of displaying his absolute power. When Maggie’s tour visits Providence, what bridges the superstitions of these post-apocalyptic Americans and the habits of their 1980 counterparts is presented on the terrain of ubiquitous brands:

They skirted an area where all the buildings had been torn down but one. It stood alone, with great gaping holes where plate-glass had been, and large non-functional arches on one side.

‘It was a fast food building,’ Hawk explained when Wolf asked. He sounded embarrassed.

‘Why is it still standing?’

‘Because there are ignorant and superstitious people everywhere,’ Hawk muttered. 99

Ignorance and superstition are the sole explanations Hawk can muster to account for the continuing existence of what presumably is a former McDonald’s fast-food restaurant. In addition to signifying the yellow ‘M’ of the McDonald’s brand, the ornamental arches suggest the arches of a church. The building stands because the brand has taken on sacrosanct status. Bearing in mind Wolf’s comment, ‘This must be how America was all the time before the Collapse’, Swanwick’s presentation of the fast-food restaurant invites one to think about how it functions in our own time, and why customers consume food in McDonald’s in their millions every day. Marx’s outline of commodity fetishism will help us here:

the commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material (dinglich) relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. 100

It is irrelevant that the arches are ‘non-functional’ – their purpose lies not in their ‘physical nature’ but in making manifest the ‘social relation between men’. As a commodity, the products sold by McDonald’s take their value from the social meaning agreed upon and emotionally invested in them. The value of McDonald’s products, assumed to be a value that distinguishes them from other fast-food products, is really a sublimation of the social value of the act of their consumption. Marx reaches for a suitable idiom to describe this commodity fetishism:
In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands.\textsuperscript{101}

The barbarism of post-apocalyptic USA lies in its unthinking fetishization of commodities, expressed in terms of desirable brands that seem to have ‘a life of their own’. This life-force encircles and protects the fast-food restaurant. Swanwick literalizes the religiosity of fetishism and the valuation of these commodities beyond their intrinsic qualities, turning brands into the object of ritual. In a religious festival Wolf observes in Wilmington, a parade processes to the river: a priest, eight altar girls, ‘twelve burly men carrying the flower-draped body of an ancient Cadillac’, and then the faithful congregation. The ‘car was placed in a hole in the ground, sprinkled with holy water, and set afire. [Wolf] asked the guide what story lay behind the ritual, and the boy shrugged. It was old, he was told, very very old.’\textsuperscript{102} Christian worship is here corrupted and the significance of this ritual is a lost historical referent. Shared attitudes towards the passing of America’s automobile brands are organized into a ritual that seems to be the only way these Americans can gain a semblance of collective control over their industrial decline. The social relations of (or the cessation of) production are displaced into the magical properties of the Cadillac, treated with a reverence befitting the ‘life’ invested in this prestigious automobile brand.

The main target of Swanwick’s satire appears to be an economic system in which the uneven terrain of the global market allows one continent to exploit the resources and capital of another. Some of these uneven exchanges have been identified as colonialism or neocolonialism. In our current economic system, certain brands focus consumption practices in ways that defy logic – that could be called a magical aura – but are in fact the accretion of habit whose origins in the workings of consumer capitalism are often obscured to contemporaries just as the historical roots of the Wilmington parade are not clear to the participants. As the short story implies, the continuing cultural accreditation of brands such as Cadillac or McDonald’s takes on a fetish quality that values them for their social function in the community, not the intrinsic use-value of the commodities themselves. The function of defining the self and community that religion once provided appears in ‘Janis’ to have been displaced by the collective value projected onto commodities, in light of which the USA’s twentieth-century capitalist practices appear to be as primitive as their post-apocalyptic equivalents.
American Regeneration

‘Eastward Ho!’ uses a mode of expression that is satirical and ironic; in ‘Janis’ that mode is satirical and melancholic. In taking the least critical view of twentieth-century American society, Warday has the most to mourn after the USA’s destruction, and it is largely the most despairing of the three, lacking even the energy of their social criticism. However, Strieber and Kunetka’s novel, clinging to a belief in key American qualities, is riddled with that ideology Sharp identified in nuclear frontier fiction: white Americans will survive because the war will bring out their toughness, religious faith and ingenuity. Several characters in Warday believe adversity has left Americans leaner than before: T. K. Allerton of Savannah proclaims ‘we’ve learned something about just how tough we can be if we’ve got to be’ and General George Briggs states that the war has ‘revealed toughness and gristle and fellow-feeling that we didn’t even know we had’. Troublingly, the novel suggests that psychotherapy is a luxury most patients could manage to go without: ‘the number of people in therapy has dropped by more than half […] most of us work so hard we don’t have time to be crazy’.

In Warday, Christian faith has been an engine of survival. Strieber and his family survived in a school attached to a church in New York and ‘While the city died we prayed there.’ One is reminded of the Puritan Captivity Narratives of the late seventeenth century, such as Mary Rowlandson’s A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682), where through faith in the face of adversity the devout are led out of bondage and suffering. In Warday, this model can be applied to the nation itself, returned to Christian devotion in a time of violence because God has shown mercy in ensuring the survival of some. Several Americans share Strieber’s confession, ‘the prospect of death […] brought me back once and for all to the Church’. The character of Reverend Michael Dougherty, Catholic Priest, notes that since Warday ‘my parish has more than quadrupled in size’. The renewal of the USA as a practicing Christian country is expressive of the language of divine ordination that suffuses other representations of nuclear war survivors, such as Roger Corman’s 1956 film Day the World Ended. Finally, as in ‘Janis’, in Warday the US remains in possession of scientific and technological knowledge. Tevis professes, ‘we’ve kept our intellectual base intact. Our schools are still damn good.’ The assertion that the production of knowledge can somehow float free from the material base that makes it possible suggests deep investment in the ideology of American ingenuity. At the school where the Strieber family find refuge, the ‘school’s science teacher, Mrs Dannay, had managed to rig up a thing
called a Kearney Fallout Meter out of a coffee can, some aluminium foil
and crushed gypsum she dug out of the wall. This apparatus identified
which areas had low enough levels of radiation in which to survive. Mrs
Dannay’s Fallout Meter fits an American tradition where scientific knowl-
edge emerges out of the empirical negotiation of practical conundrums. Scientists like Franklin and Edison have been mythologized for heroic
contributions to knowledge through individual effort, and Mrs Dannay is
a similar entrant into the national pantheon of ‘can-do’ ingenuity.

In *Warday*, the greatness of America’s devastated civilization lies not in
its technology but in its people and the promise they represent. Travelling
back to Dallas at the novel’s end, Strieber has a feeling of ‘America in us,
the promise and the children. It is the common dream of gold – the golden
valley, the golden door, the gold in the hills, the gold at the end of the
rainbow.’ A tension lies between the ‘us’ Strieber speaks for and the
‘common dream’ of America, though; by placing Hispanic Americans and
Native Americans in the separatist state Aztlan, by substituting Japanese
investors in place of Asian Americans and by depicting the disappearance
of black Americans (‘you see the worse emptiness in the black neigh-
bourhoods’) it seems when the novel speaks for ingenious and Christian
American survivors those Americans are white by default. Seed contends
that the novel ‘repeatedly questions’ national unity, something that we
have seen plenty of evidence to justify, but in reaching out to the rump of
America the narrative manages to find ‘coherence’ in the national spirit
preserved through nuclear war and carried into the future.

The depictions in *Warday*, *Eastward Ho!* and *Janis* are unlike many
other representations of American invasions. First, none of them use the
USA’s destruction in a future war as an alarm call for Americans to be more
alert to the necessity of tightening its military and political apparatuses,
and since the nineteenth century this clarion quality of future-war fiction
has been pervasive. Second, none of these texts represents America’s
invaders as communists (or their occasional metaphoric understudies,
extraterrestrials) – nuclear war reduces the USSR to depths of abjection
worse than the USA. Third, these texts insist that after a nuclear war the
savagery and underdevelopment that Americans will descend into under-
cuts the country’s claims to represent a higher civilization. Or, as one New
African visitor puts it in *Janis*, in misperceiving their advanced technology
(which explicitly includes nuclear weapons) as civilization, Americans had
been oblivious to how their practices of living together were utterly uncivil-
ilized. All three texts reinscribe the racialized verbal sleight-of-hand that
when ‘American’ comes without a qualifying term it automatically refers
to a white person of European descent, which the African-American
novelist and critic Toni Morrison (amongst others) observes\textsuperscript{108} – even the New Africans’ terminology in ‘Janis’ appears to conflate ‘Americans’ with ‘whites’, although some Americans in the story are black.

‘Eastward Ho!’, produced during the civil rights struggle, invites one to indict white American attitudes of superiority. ‘The Feast of Saint Janis’ and \textit{Warday} are 1980s texts and the victimization of poor white Americans is connected to the economic colonization undertaken by nations professing to assist America’s rebuilding. In these texts, American development is unfolding as fast as its patrons allow, and several characters sense the country is becoming a colonized subject of richer nations. Becoming the loser in the post-nuclear-war international capitalist marketplace fits the story America was telling itself about its economy (especially its manufacturing economy) in the period: these texts offer an easily digested and populist interpretation of American vulnerability. Swanwick reflects the complicity of American business in the rapacious forces of multinational capitalism and the attendant authoritarianism of that economic and social system. His story brings out the irrational social mechanics of consumer capitalism in the late twentieth century. Strieber and Kunetka’s motivation is to protest America’s nuclear weapons while pledging allegiance to the nation and its irreducible qualities. Heralding the renewed Christian faith compelled by the remaking of a (racialized) national community, \textit{Warday} seems far closer to the nuclear frontier fiction paradigm discussed by Sharp than the more cynical short stories of Tenn and Swanwick.

\textbf{Notes}

5. Seed, ‘Constructing America’s Enemies’, p. 64.


17. Kerslake, Science Fiction and Empire, pp. 76, 173–74; Seed, American Science Fiction and the Cold War, p. 185.


20. Ray Bradbury’s 1950 short-story cycle The Martian Chronicles is an SF text that combines planetary colonization and terrestrial nuclear war to critique the privileging of North American culture and the destruction of non-Western societies as a consequence of frontier expansion. In The Martian Chronicles, an alien race of Martians is wiped out by chicken pox brought by human explorers, with extended comparisons made to the deaths of Native Americans resulting from European contact. The human explorer Spender, desperate to spare Mars the despoilment of colonization (and, voiced aloud, the nuclear war that waits in Earth’s future), begins murdering the other humans in his exploration party. When Spender is killed, the compassion shown towards him by Captain Wilder, who encourages the other men to ‘think of Spender from time to time’, indicates the text’s ambivalence towards human (more specifically, European-American) civilization. Ray Bradbury, The Martian Chronicles (1950), Voyager and Harper, London (2008), pp. 83–84, 96, 105, 117.


33. Joan I. Glazer, ‘Nuclear Holocaust in Contemporary Children’s Fiction: A Surprising Amount of Agreement’, *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, 11.2 (Summer 1986), p. 87. These homological oppositions feature in Silko’s *Ceremony*. Betonie recounts an anti-Creation myth in which a Native American witch tells the story of ‘white skin people’ coming to America, a story that brings white people into being. These white people cannot see the life in the world, they fear it, and out of New Mexico rocks (presumably a reference to mined uranium) the white people ‘will lay the final pattern [...] across the world / and explode everything’ (pp. 132–38). Native American literary responses to nuclear technology (*Ceremony* included) are actually much more varied than the simple proposition that Native America communes with nature while white America rejects it and journeys towards nuclear annihilation. Wendy Rose writes tenderly of J. Robert Oppenheimer’s moral purgatory in the poem ‘Robert’ (1985) and Ray A. Young Bear’s ‘A Drive to Lone Ranger’ (1984) is coolly optimistic that the energy resources discovered on Native American reservations will regenerate the Black Eagle Child Nation’s economic health. Further references for Native American nuclear representations up to the late 1980s can be found in Helen Jaskoski, ‘Thinking Woman’s Children and the Bomb’, in Nancy Anisfield (ed.), *The Nightmare Considered: Critical Essays on Nuclear War Literature*, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, Bowling Green, OH (1991), pp. 160, 174 n. 1. See also Jane Caputi, ‘The Heart of Knowledge: Nuclear Themes in Native American Thought and Literature’, *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 16.4 (1992); Kyoko Matsunaga, ‘Post-Apocalyptic Vision and Survivance: Nuclear Writings in Native America and Japan’,


42. Tenn, ‘Eastward Ho!’, p. 287.

43. Tenn, ‘Eastward Ho!’, p. 294.


57. Tenn, ‘Eastward Ho!’, p. 286.
76. Strieber and Kunetka, Warday, pp. 50–51.
86. Strieber and Kunetka, Warday, p. 203.
90. By way of contrast, in James D. Forman’s post-nuclear-war book Doomsday Plus Twelve (1984) Japan once again becomes a superpower and occupies the United States, but the occupation is a peaceful one. To enlist the reader into support for their presence, Doomsday Plus Twelve’s plot tracks a young girl’s crusade to prevent the citizens of San Diego taking revenge on the Japanese (Brians, ‘Nuclear War Fiction for Young Readers’, p. 139).
94. Davis, City of Quartz, p. 223.
96. Strieber and Kunetka, Warday, pp. 61, 160.